



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #35 – Interview with artist Kim Henkel Transcript

Ranger Patrick Gamman: Welcome to another Webisode of Insider's Look at Grand Canyon. I'm Ranger Pat and I'm up bright and early on a cold winter day and I have a guest here- the Artist in Residence Kim Henkel. Kim, welcome to the show.

Artist Kim Henkel: Good morning.

Patrick: So, one of the neat things that I've done with some other Artists in Residence is talk about the art that they do and we're going to share with the folks out there some of the neat stuff you do. But I've noticed that you're not just an artist- which is awesome- but you're also a park ranger. Could you share with the folks a few of the parks you've worked at as a ranger and some of the special things that you've done.

Kim: Sure. I've worked three summer seasons at Mount Rushmore as the Artist in Residence, the Sculptor in Residence, and I put on workshops and also did a lot of education outreach. And I've worked at the Badlands and did some museum design for some wayside exhibits. And I worked at Aztec Ruins last winter.

Patrick: So, when you worked up at the Badlands, did you do anything with any of the sciences up there?

Kim: I worked with paleontology and the museum people.

Patrick: Wow! Did you get to, like, see any skeletons, any bones? What era, what kind of actual bones were they?

Kim: The Mesocene Era, so the early mammals. Like the mesohippus and titanotheres.

Patrick: That's excellent! So you've actually combined being a park ranger, sciences, and art. I mean, being a sculptor at Mount Rushmore. Was that fun?

Kim: Yes, it was a lot of fun. Working outside every day is awesome.

Patrick: So now you're here at Grand Canyon for a three-week stint as Artist in Residence, but you've got a different form of art. Could you tell the folks out there what your art is?

Kim: Well, I do pinhole photography and I build my own cameras out of cans and I work in a darkroom and I do actual processing and I like to travel around to the national parks in the Southwest and take pinhole photographs. They're black and white and they look historical.

Patrick: Well, I've got to see some of your work and it is amazing. I'm glad you're doing it here. Are you doing anything with any of the community here? Are you putting on any workshops for anybody?

Kim: Currently working with the 6th graders over at the Grand Canyon School and today we're going to be actually printing their pictures. We had them do portraits last week.

Patrick: So, let's get a little more detailed about pinhole photography. Could you maybe walk us through the process quickly of, you know, like, what's the first thing you do, how long you're out there, what's it take to expose it? So, first of all, I mean, I can see you've got, like, tin cans here and that's a pretty cool thing and you've got a bunch of electrical tape on it. Go ahead and give the folks out there sort of a run-down on how that works.

Kim: Okay. Well, this camera's loaded. It has photography paper in it. The cameras are made out of cans and the camera obscuras could be made out of any container. This room could be a camera. Inside the camera is painted an ultra-matte black and then it's loaded with photography paper. And there's a hole drilled in it and then on the outside we tape on a piece of aluminum foil and it's drilled with a tiny little pinhole. And light travels through the pinhole and just fractions and burns an image onto the paper. And when you take the paper into the darkroom you will print it and it becomes a photo negative.

Patrick: Awesome! And the process, like at different times of day, is it always, like, you know, you're out there and it's like one second, or two seconds...how does that differ?

Kim: Well, it differs all kinds. It depends on what time of year it is, what time of day it is, what the weather's like. Like earlier this morning we went out and I said, "Well, it looks like we're going to have to take about an eight-minute exposure." And that just becomes instinct, because the time of the year, where the sun is, and how hazy it is. So it just depends. It becomes instinct after a while.

Patrick: So, what are some images that you have gotten from Grand Canyon while you've been here?

Kim: I've been taking a lot of landscape pictures down into the camera, pointing the camera down, and what happens is the farthest away tends to be kind of hazy because of the atmosphere. And I've also taken a lot of pictures of the old snags, the trees. And I'm real interested in archaeology, so I've taken some pictures of the pictographs and also just along the trails down at Hermit's Trail and down at Dripping Springs. I like the idea of the switchbacks, being able to see the switchbacks.

Patrick: Well, Kim I've got to see some of your work, and if you're watching the enhanced podcasts, the public will get to see a little bit of that. So thanks for joining us on the show.

Kim: Thanks, Pat.

Patrick: We'll catch you folks next time on Insider's Look at Grand Canyon.